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ABSTRACT

Intended for regular class teachers, the booklet provides information to aid in mainstreaming the learning disabled (LD) child. Sections address the following areas: characteristics of the LD child (legal definition, areas of difficulty); educational assessment (the assessment team, types of tests); reading; mathematics (specific arithmetic programs); effective teaching methods, and resources on learning disabilities. (SBH)

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"If we can raise a generation
That accepts those of us who are different. . .
On the basis of what we can do. . .
Then
We will have come a long way
Toward equality of opportunity.
. . .Integration is needed in order to fully educate the non-handicapped
As well as the handicapped."

S. Phyllis Stearner

Randy: The Learning Disabled Child in Your Classroom
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Gayle Gear

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

What we are talking about is mainstreaming, a term you've heard a lot about. For you, it is a unique opportunity to experience a whole new facet of teaching. Mainstreaming satisfies the educational needs of handicapped children. At the same time, it is providing a challenging learning situation for both teachers and students. You, the regular education teacher, will gain new insights into children and discover a different aspect of learning that will be both fascinating and personally rewarding.

A Word About *Different*

For some reason we have ingrained in us a conception that "different" means "inferior." This thought pattern is understandable, yet it can often get in the way of both our teaching and our own learning.

A child with a learning disability is immediately labeled "different" from the other children in the classroom. The fact is, he **is** different. He may have more difficulty in reading, math and other skills; and in many other behavioral respects he may be different. But so is **each** of the children you teach. They will individually approach tasks in a variety of ways because they are, indeed, different. The fact is — so are you.

That is the sheer beauty of working with people — observing and enjoying their differences. Because of those differences, you are able to share a unique aspect of yourself with all students, and they share a special part of themselves with you.

If any child, including one who is eligible for special education services, is helped to understand that his differences in ability to learn are only part of him, and that he and his differences are accepted, he will be more open to you and to what you are teaching. Teaching him is an expansion of your teach-

"Implementation of mainstreaming then can be adequately approached only by understanding the differences."

S. Phyllis Stearner

ing method — another way of enabling another student to learn.

All of your students will understand that "different" is o.k. because you approach it as such. A meaningful way to look at this idea is by doing a simple exercise at the beginning of the school year. About a week after class has begun, make a list about **each** child, with the heading "What Makes (Susie, Joe, Sally, etc.) Unique Is. . ." List both the positive and the not-so-desirable differences. Then go back and highlight the positive differences. It might be helpful to have the list where you will readily see it, in order that you may read the highlighted statements often. In doing this, you will find your teaching relationship with each child becoming stronger, and barriers to his learning will become weaker and more easily overcome.

And the learning disabled child? Because you understand about "different," he will be able to successfully learn and grow in the accepting atmosphere of your classroom.

Randy wants to learn too;
it's just a little harder for him.

Children who have specific learning problems in reading, writing, spelling, or arithmetic are present in almost every classroom. Most often it is you, the regular classroom teacher, who will not only recognize the signs of a specific learning disability, but will also play a major role in helping the learning disabled child to overcome his difficulties in academic learning. With the help of support personnel and individualized materials, and with appropriate classroom management, YOU can enable such a child to enjoy success in the classroom.

Legal Definition of Learning Disabilities

According to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, United States Office of Education (1977), a specific learning disability is a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written language, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, to think, to speak, to read, to write, to spell, and/or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. Not included are learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing or motor handicaps, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

Who Is The Learning Disabled Child?

Most children experience difficulty at some point in their school careers. This does not mean they have a learning disability.

- There can be learning problems due to illness or other handicaps (hypoglycemia, absence from school, blindness, etc.) WE AREN'T TALKING ABOUT THAT.

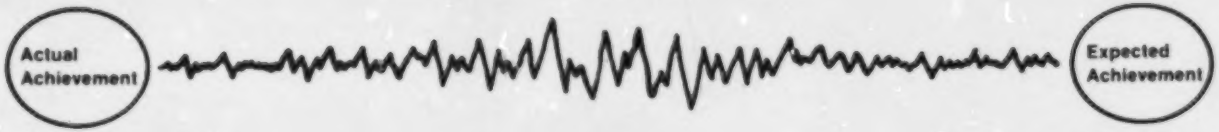
- There can be learning problems due to inadequate opportunity to learn (no books or crayons available, frequent relocation). WE AREN'T TALKING ABOUT THAT.

- There can be learning problems due to improper teaching of skill sequences (initial instruction that was inappropriate or that the child was not ready for). WE AREN'T TALKING ABOUT THAT, EITHER.

WHAT WE ARE TALKING ABOUT when we say "learning disability" is a disorder which is manifested by significant discrepancy between a child's actual achievement and his expected achievement. And this gap is not due to external conditions (e.g., environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage). We often say, "He isn't working up to his potential. I know he can learn." The child, too, is frustrated by his inability to master certain tasks.

This underachievement may be due to a specific learning disability. The child may experience deficits in one or more academic areas—mathematics, reading, spelling, and/or writing.

Specific Learning Disability

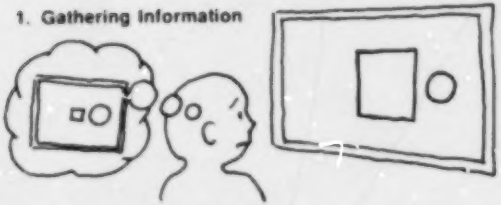


For you and the learning disabled child in your classroom, looking for **how** this occurred is probably not important. Your attention should focus on how to accommodate instruction and how to cultivate the child's assets and minimize his deficiencies. It is of great importance to keep in mind that these children **can** learn, once their problems are clarified and the proper remediation is undertaken.

If it is determined that a child in your class has a learning disability, he is eligible to receive special education services. This means that you, as his teacher, can call upon specialists to work with you and the child. These specialists are available as assistants when needed. However, the responsibility and the joy of being the essential element in the child's educational growth remain with you.

The learning disabled child may experience difficulty in a variety of areas:

1. Gathering Information

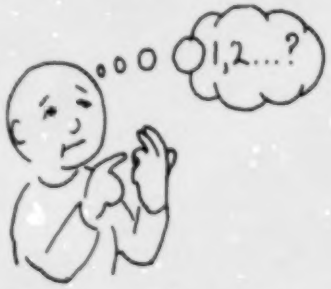


The child cannot judge depth, distance or size correctly.

2. Storing Information

The child cannot perceive small details or categorize similar objects; he confuses shapes, colors and sizes.

3. Processing Information



The child may have poor memory or recall; he may not be able to remember sequences of sounds, or how to match letters with sounds.

4. Expressing Information

The child may have trouble relating what he knows by speech, writing, or physical activity.

5. Speaking and Listening

The child's brain does not control speech muscles accurately so he may not be able to successfully reproduce sounds. He cannot perceive sounds or their order in words so he is unable to repeat them correctly.

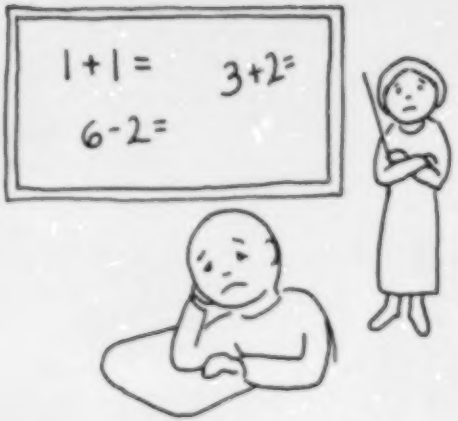
6. Reading

Words and letters may be confused or seen backwards. The child cannot build words from letters.

7. Writing

The child may not be able to copy a visual image. He may be able to discern different shapes, but cannot draw them accurately.

8. Arithmetic



The child cannot understand or use number concepts. He may reverse the order of figures.

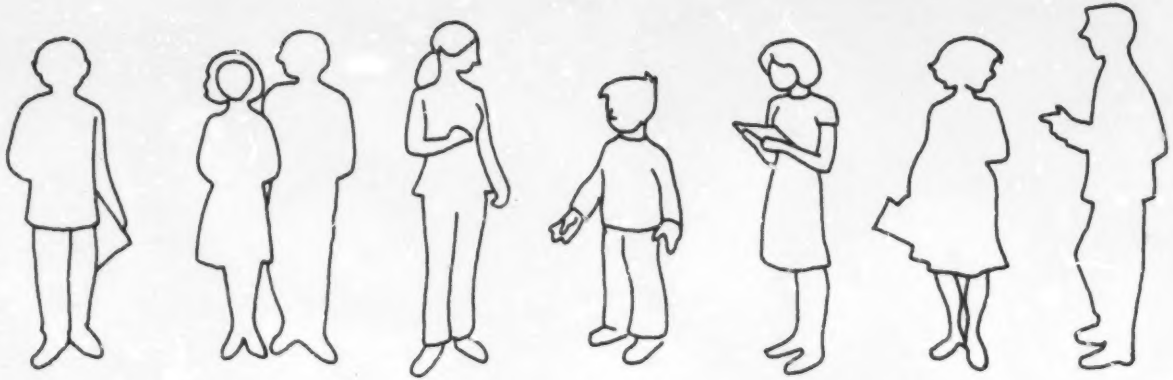
9. Other Problems

The learning disabled child may exhibit a short attention span, anger, nervousness, perseveration (fastidious repetition of a task), impulsiveness, or hyperactivity.

And he doesn't know he's different,
but he's getting an idea. . .

You will discover that the learning disabled child may exhibit any combination of these various characteristic difficulties. However, most difficulties affect performance of symbolic processes and, therefore, classroom learning can be quite a challenge. Often, as a result of a child's difficulty in learning and repeated failure, he may lack motivation, the intrinsic desire to succeed. You can nurture that motivation by providing opportunities for success throughout the day and by rewarding the child for tasks well done. At the same time, you can encourage the child to strive and to progress toward more difficult objectives. Your expectations for the child will be carefully geared toward individual differences in motivation and in abilities. Be careful to insure that the child does not become discouraged because of achievement expectations that are too high or too low. Careful attention can be given to helping each child develop a positive attitude so that he can relate successfully to his peers, his family, and others. Through a carefully planned educational assessment, you can, with the help of specialists, formulate instructional objectives which are appropriate for the child who has specific learning difficulties.

'Cause when the teacher asks a question. . .most of the others raise their hands.



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ASSESSMENT TEAM 13

Who The Learning Disabled Child Is can be determined by educational assessment. This involves posing educationally relevant questions concerning the child's learning behavior, in order to plan an appropriate instructional program for him. Specific objectives for instruction and material, and methods for accomplishing these objectives, can be derived from the educational diagnosis. Since a child's disability may vary considerably from a simple problem requiring minor diagnostic procedures and simple remedial techniques to a complex disability requiring extensive assessment techniques and prolonged treatment, you and the other members of the assessment team can cooperate in planning for the assessment procedure and the remedial program, according to the individual needs of the child.

The role of the learning disability specialist (special educator) will differ according to the amount of support and the consultative services needed. She may help identify the manner and means by which a specific child learns best, develop an educational intervention plan, select and originate individualized instructional materials for in-class teaching, design individualized instructional procedures, observe and measure behavior, instruct you in principles of applied behavior analysis, and train you to measure and evaluate progress. She may also work directly with a child or a small group on specific problem areas.

You, the regular classroom teacher, are in the best position to identify initially, or to analyze, a child's particular learning disorder because you can observe and assess his performance in many different situations requiring a variety of skill abilities. This initial assessment may include formal standardized tests, informal skill probes, and interviews with the child and his parents. Screening devices such as the **Pupil Behavior Rating Scale**, developed under a United States Public Service Research Grant (available through the U.S. Public Health Service, Bureau of Neurological and Sensory Diseases) have been quite useful to the regular classroom teacher in initially describing the learning characteristics of children. Information derived from these instru-

ments may also be most helpful to the specialist as he plans for additional diagnosis and for a remedial program.

There are several means of assessing areas of difficulty in children who demonstrate learning problems. Four major groups of tests are used in the assessment process: **process tests, academic aptitude tests, standardized achievement tests, behavior assessments.**

Processing is the manner in which a child interprets, or puts into meaningful use, that which he has perceived by his senses. **Process tests** are used by some learning disabilities specialists to diagnose underlying processing difficulties. The most widely used process test is the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities (ITPA).

The most widely used **academic aptitude tests** for children are the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) and the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (Binet). Both are commonly referred to as intelligence tests.

For testing achievement the most popular trend has been towards criterion-referenced tests. These can be composed by you in order to assess what you judge important for the child to learn. For example, you may decide a child should learn the short vowel sounds. After a period of instruction, you give a simple test to determine if the child has fulfilled the criterion. If he has failed to reach the objective, you analyze why and provide additional instruction before retesting. Criterion-referenced testing is an ongoing assessment technique used in diagnostic-prescriptive teaching.

You may assess the progress of students with specific learning problems by using **behavior assessment tests** such as direct daily measurement. This involves direct, continuous, and precise measurement of a student's responses in a particular skill behavior. For example, if you want to assess a child's ability to identify

the sounds for the letters "b," "g," and "f," you ask him to produce the sounds for these letters and then record whether or not he is able to do this. You may also determine if instruction is responsible for improvement by using this assessment technique.

What will all of this testing really do for the child?

Since you will plan an individualized curriculum for the learning disabled child, it is extremely important to determine the skill level at which he is operating. The testing will help you do this. Successfully mastering **each step** toward a skill is the best way for the child to accomplish the desired skill: reading, math, etc. It's kind of like a ladder. Each rung represents a specific step towards a skill and the child cannot move to the next rung without feeling sure of the step he is on. Being confused and unsteady, the child will depend on your expertise and emotional support to guide him from one step to the next. Your awareness of his skill level, derived from observation and testing, will put him on that first rung, looking upward.

Reading

Can read selections

Can read sentences

Can read consonant-vowel-consonant words

Can give short vowel sounds

Can give consonant sounds

Sometimes Randy's a little like a butterfly, trapped in a cocoon.
He knows who he really is, and he pushes to get out;
But the walls won't give.

And Randy doesn't like that, because cocoons can't fly.

Most cocoons learn to open by themselves. But I don't think Randy's will. The things inside that split cocoon walls aren't working quite right for him.

READING IS. . .
discovering new worlds
learning how to build your model plane
knowing which present has your name on it
very complex and difficult to learn. . .

Occasionally we find some children who learn how to read effortlessly. For most, however, it is not so easy. You can be alert to the first signs of a potential reading difficulty by observing children in various situations requiring reading skills. You may be able to detect a pattern of errors which could be limiting a child's ability to read. The following chart suggests specific patterns for which you should be on the alert. Observations may be recorded on individual checklists.

Word Recognition

- Usually stops and refuses to respond.
- Mispronounces, looking at the initial consonant and guessing at a word.
- Tries to break a word into syllables.
- Slowly sounds out a whole word.
- Tries to identify a word from its configuration.
- Substitutes letters or entire words.
- Reverses words or letters.
- Confuses letter order.

Oral Reading

- Allows others to pronounce words while he reads.

- Substitutes words.
- Reads word-by-word, emphasizing words rather than phrases in easy, familiar material.
- Fails to keep his place, skipping lines or not following left to right through a line of print.
- Omits one or more words in a line of print.
- Fails to observe punctuation.
- Is unable to comprehend (less than 75 percent comprehension).
- Repeats words already properly pronounced.
- Adds or inserts one or more words which may change the meaning of the sentence.
- Reads without expression.

Silent Reading

- Fails to keep his place.
- Reads rapidly at the expense of accuracy.
- Reads slowly.
- Is unable to adjust speed to the purpose for reading.
- Comprehends less than 75 percent.

Since many learning disabled children have difficulties in reading, the specialist or the classroom teacher, depending on the complexity of the problem, can observe more closely for specific reading difficulties and may give more skill-related tests. Before giving any tests, however, you and the specialist should have specific questions in mind about the child's instructional needs. Only the most appropriate measurement tools should be used so that the results will identify the child's deficits and his strengths and will reveal the level at which to begin instruction in each academic area. The following standardized achievement tests are often used in reading assessment. They are inexpensive and relatively easy to administer by either you or the specialist.

The Gates-McKillop Reading Diagnostic Tests

The Spache Diagnostic Reading Scales

The Sucher-Alred Oral Reading Assessment

The Peabody Individual Achievement Test

The Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests

A grade or age-level score will be obtained from these tests. However, much useful information can be gathered as you study the test results, particularly the kinds and numbers of errors.

But Randy doesn't care if someone else wants to help him do it — he just wants to fly.

Conquering obstacles to reading will be an exciting accomplishment for the learning disabled chil[illegible] our classroom. Following are some hints for you in giving individualized remedial reading instruction, and some suggested ways to treat small problems before they become greater.

- Plan opportunities throughout the day for the disabled reader to practice newly acquired skills. FIVE-MINUTE DRILL SESSIONS can be scheduled for working on specific word recognition and on word attack or vocabulary skills.
- Plan for brief opportunities to go over skill work with a child or to HEAR HIM READ ORALLY. Five minutes may be sufficient to record progress made and/or to note skill work yet necessary. This is also a good time to encourage the child and to praise him for progress made.
- Give specific and easily corrected ASSIGNMENTS.
- Plan ORAL READING LESSONS separated from other activities going on in the room. Discuss the content carefully, and show a genuine interest in what is being read.
- Confer with the specialist frequently concerning appropriate ADDITIONAL SKILL WORK activities and practice seat work.

- Explain to the student WHY SKILL WORK is necessary.
- Give opportunities for GROUP WORK as well as for individual assignments. Change grouping arrangements often, e.g., after completion of a project.
- Provide a wide range of activities, requiring various types and levels of abilities and covering a VARIETY of interests. Appropriate activities include word games, phonics games, individual self-correcting activities, dramatizations, listening activities using the tape recorder or the record player, oral reading for taping, and individual seat work exercises.
- Build a REPERTOIRE of creative skill work which can be done quickly at the blackboard or at the student's seat. Transparencies, cleverly and appropriately made, may be used on the overhead projector.
- Select SPECIAL MATERIALS, readable with 90 percent accuracy, for a child to read independently. Many high-interest, low-vocabulary reading materials are available and can be located with the aid of the learning disabilities specialist.

The disabled reader may require other special considerations in the classroom. In order to keep up with content materials which are at grade level, some children may need a volunteer or family member to read important information to them. Often tapes are made and used for this purpose.

If a child is reading aloud above his level, difficult words should be pronounced for him so he can comprehend what he is reading. The same words may need to be pronounced many times before he can spontaneously recognize them. An oral examination should be given to assess a child's knowledge in the content areas if his reading ability is considerably below grade level. A volunteer or an aide may be enlisted to record his responses. **Grading a child's work should be adjusted so that he does not constantly experience failing marks. He should receive grades that represent progress made on the level at which he is currently working.**

So it's o.k. if it takes longer, and has to happen in a different way — as long as it happens.

MATH IS. . .
counting your friends or your money
telling time
sharing your M & M's evenly
sometimes hard to figure out. . .

Very early in their school careers, many children encounter difficulties in learning basic arithmetic skills. Mathematical concepts which often pose problems are quantitive concepts, shape discrimination sets and number concepts, auditory-visual association of numbers, computational skills, and the place value system. For example, a child may not be able to associate the number "6" with the written or the spoken word "six," or to understand the significance of reversing the numbers "74" and "47." Time, money, and measurements can also be difficult to comprehend. Early identification and diagnosis of these problems are important in helping a child to overcome the disability and experience success in mathematics in the future. **The Key Math Diagnostic Arithmetic Test** is an excellent tool for assessing such deficiencies. This is an individually administered instrument consisting of fourteen subtests arranged in order of increasing difficulty and divided into the areas of content, operations, and applications.

Short skill probes, criterion-referenced tests, and **patterns of errors made during seat work exercises** are also good assessment tools, because they can pinpoint a specific skill deficiency and outline the objectives to be attained.

You may use assessment procedures often to determine if a child is ready to progress from one skill to another. For anything other than a mild problem, the learning disability specialist may be called on to aid in assessment and to plan for a remedial program. Most remediation plans for arithmetic use manipulative materials, repetition, and color to achieve their goals. These arithmetic programs are useful in teaching arithmetic skills to children who have problems in this area.

Cuisenaire Rods are designed to help children understand math concepts through the use of color-coded rods of varying lengths. Color and size characteristics are associated with numbers in a complete system. These rods are particularly useful in teaching oral word problems, left-to-right discrimination, visual sequencing, and auditory and visual memory. The visual, tactile, and manipulative aspects are useful to many children disabled in arithmetic.

Structural Arithmetic is a program based upon working with colored blocks and with cubes which have number properties. Experimenting with these concrete materials gives children insight into number relationships. Although the scope of the program is kindergarten through third grade, it can be quite useful for helping older children who are experiencing difficulties in learning arithmetical concepts. The sequence includes working with measurement, with money, with fractions, and with Roman numerals.

Programmed Math Series One is a sequential series of eight programmed tests intended for use with children who are having arithmetic difficulties. The series includes work ranging from the formation of numerals and horizontal adding to operations with mixed numerals and measurement. Placement tests and continued progress tests are included. This material can be successfully used to reinforce learning from other texts. Repetition is another feature of this material.

DISTAR Arithmetic is a beginning arithmetic program designed for use with small groups of children through the second grade. Concepts taught include the meaning of process signs, algebra addition, addition and subtraction, story problems, and counting by various numbers. The program requires active participation on the part of each child. This program may be adapted successfully for older children who require remedial work in mathematics.

Mathematics for Individual Achievement is available in textbook form or in flexible individualized materials. It is designed for children, kindergarten through sixth grade. Primary emphasis is placed upon mastering basic operations with whole and rational numbers; however, geometry, measurement, and other elementary skills are also treated. Since little actual reading is required to complete these activities, a child who has reading deficits is not penalized.

If someone were to take some time, and very gently unravel that shell and carefully peek inside. . .They'd see a beautiful, beautiful butterfly. It would be Randy, smiling.

The complexity of his work and the differences in his learning potential are not the greatest difficulties of the learning disabled child. At the very root of his problems may be a disorganized and unfocused environment.

You can do a great deal to provide the right environment in which the learning disabled child will be able to grow and learn. Some suggestions are:

- **INDIVIDUALIZE THE PROBLEM.** With the help of the specialist, formulate an educational plan based upon a child's specific deficits and strengths, his language and mathematical functioning, his level of intelligence, his emotional status, and his educational history.
- **TEACH** according to readiness levels.
- **CONSIDER THE VARYING tolerance levels** of children. The multisensory approach can be used for many learning disabled children.
- **PLAN OPPORTUNITIES** for performance in verbal and nonverbal tasks, attempting to interrelate these.
- **GIVE DIRECTIONS CLEARLY,** concisely, and slowly, making certain they are understood and allowing time for a child to formulate his ideas.
- **PROVIDE A WORKING PLACE** free from distraction.
- **MODIFY PRINTED MATERIALS** using large, bold print and wider spacing to separate information for the child who has difficulty recognizing important details. Special equipment, such as a tape recorder with headphones, may be used for emphasis.

- **PERMIT CHILDREN to use concrete learning aids** as long as necessary. This may include a reading window or finger to assist in keeping the place while reading; concrete materials for counting when working arithmetic problems; carrying and borrowing marks which help children focus attention and remember; and the use of a typewriter for children whose writing is slow and labored.

- **LIMIT THE COMPLEXITY and the size of a task** for the child who is easily frustrated and has a short attention span.

- **ALLOW THE CHILD TO PRINT** if this is easier for him.

- **CREATE A SUCCESS PATTERN FOR HIM.** The most vital element in the child's overcoming his disability is a strong, positive self-concept. For the learning disabled child that self-concept may be extremely fragile. With genuine praise, and a series of tasks which allow him to succeed and progress, he will become more confident of his ability and more willing to reach even farther.

JUST FOR YOU

Use **what you have** and adapt it.

Seek out the special education specialist when necessary.

Locate the Instructional Materials Center in your area for materials you may borrow.

There are community and regional organizations for parents and professional groups which focus on this disability. Locate them, and attend a meeting.

Enjoy the child's progress, knowing that **your** efforts are making it happen.

FOR YOU TO READ

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FOR YOUR STUDENTS TO READ

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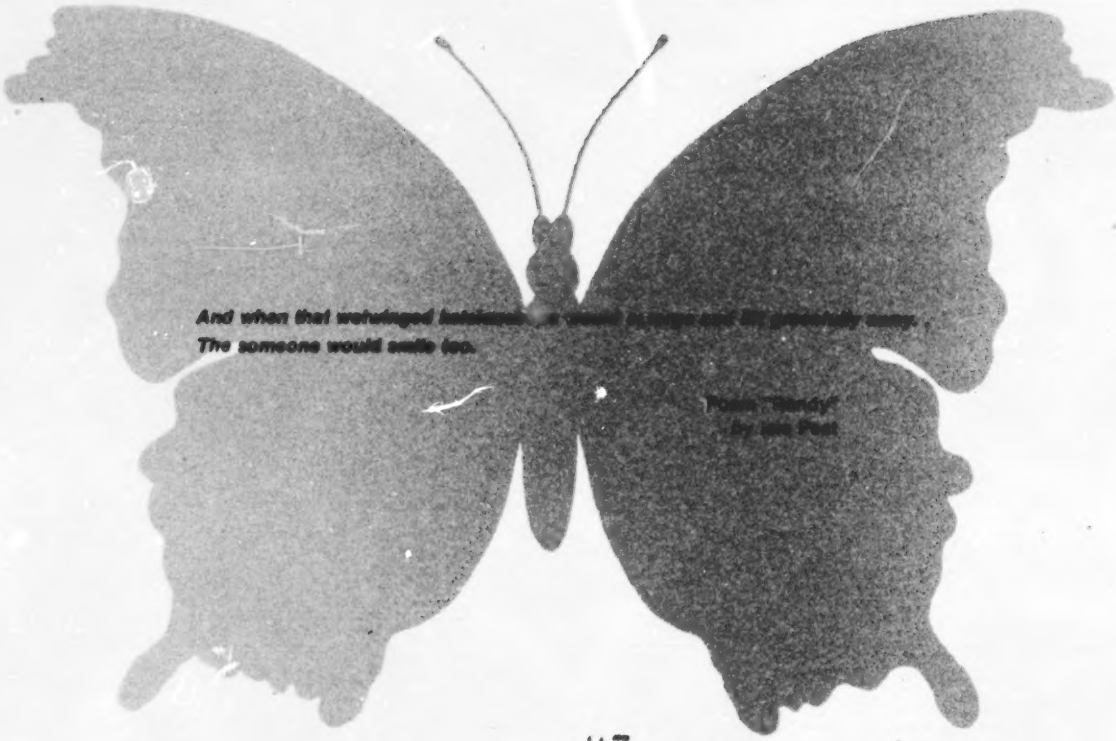
OTHER RESOURCES

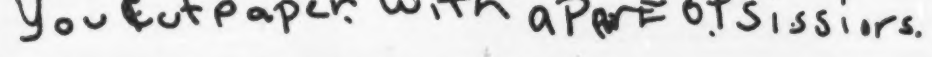
American Foundation for Learning Disabilities
P.O. Box 196
Convent Station, NJ 07961

Association for Children with Learning Disabilities
4156 Library Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15236
(412) 341-1515

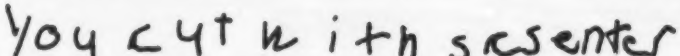

And when that wotulinged [illegible]
The someone would smile too.
Pooh "Bandy"
by [illegible]

27

Randy wrote this sentence today:



He was very excited. So was I. Last week the sentence looked like this:



He told me, as he handed it in this morning, "It's not all o.k., but it's better."
He beamed as he spoke, and it wasn't so much the sentence he had written, as his face.

"That's beautiful Randy, I really like how it looks."

"Thank you, Mrs. Drew, you're a real good teacher. You helped me be smarter."

That was beautiful too, but the best feeling came when he smiled and asked for another piece of paper...
"I want to try again."